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reinforcing bar supporting portions 6 while sliding on the pair of thin-walled members constituting the supporting protrusion s 5, until it is arranged coaxially with the joint on the supporting protrusion 5 side of the joint. As the engagement further progresses, the above-described reinforcing bar comes into contact with the ridge line portion sloping on the opening cover 2 side of the supporting protrusions 5 installed on the other side (side B which is opposite to side A) of the joint, and is automatically guided toward the reinforcing bar supporting portions 6 while sliding on the pair of thin-walled members constituting the supporting protrusion s 5, until it is arranged coaxially with the joint also on side B of the joint. Next, when the joint is engaged with the other reinforcing bar (12-b) substantially aligned therewith, this reinforcing bar also becomes coaxial with the joint on both side A and side B thereof. The pairs of thin-walled members associated with the respective reinforcing bars 12-a and 12-b are separated by a substantially linear wall section 22. Next, the joint is pulled back by its half length toward the first reinforcing bar, and the contact position between the two reinforcing bars is mated with the longitudinal central portion of the joint. By this single reciprocal movement of the joint, the two reinforcing bars can easily attain a coaxial relationship. Thereafter, the bolt 13 is threaded in to fasten the reinforcing bar to the joint, whereby it is possible to prevent the coaxial relationship from being disturbed by the coaxial adjustment operation of other reinforcing bar pairs. This effect can be achieved by the fact that the thin-walled members constituting the supporting protrusion s have an angle shape ridge line sloping on both sides of the joint.

In the Claims

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Sub 1
B57
C3
(PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) A mortar grouting type joint for reinforcing bars, comprising a hollow cylindrical body having an opening cover (2) at an end, a bolt hole (8) on the side wall, and first and second supporting protrusions (5) on the inner peripheral wall, adapted to support reinforcing bars (12) with bolts (13) and the supporting protrusions (5), wherein:

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the portion of the inner peripheral wall between the first and second supporting protrusions is substantially linear;

at least a first of the supporting protrusions (5) consists of a pair of thin-walled members extending in the longitudinal direction of the hollow cylindrical body, wherein the contact points of each of said thin-walled members with said peripheral wall define a line substantially parallel to a line defined by the contact points of the corresponding thin-walled member with said peripheral wall; and

said thin-walled members each have a ridge line (7) sloping toward the opening cover (2), with the portion of the thin-walled member supporting the reinforcing bar (12) inserted through the opening cover (2) constituting the apex.

15. (AMENDED) A mortar grouting type joint for reinforcing bars, comprising a hollow cylindrical body having an opening cover (2) at an end, a bolt hole (8) on the side wall, and supporting protrusions (5) on the inner peripheral wall, adapted to support reinforcing bars (12) with bolts (13) and the supporting protrusions (5), wherein:

each supporting protrusion (5) consists of a pair of thin-walled members extending in the longitudinal direction of the hollow cylindrical body; and

the portion of the inner peripheral wall between the first and second supporting protrusions is substantially linear;

said thin-walled members each have a ridge line (7) sloping toward the opening cover (2), with the portion of the thin-walled member supporting the reinforcing bar (12) inserted through the opening cover (2) constituting the apex; and

engagement of the thin-walled members with the reinforcing bars aligns the reinforcing bars in a substantially coaxial fashion.

Remarks:

Applicant has submitted herewith proposed drawings illustrating reference numerals 20 and 22, referring respectively to the "linear" portion of the inner peripheral wall between the first and second supporting protrusions, and to the contact points of each of the thin-walled members with the peripheral wall. Applicant believes the

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proposed drawings conform to the Examiner's recommendations in the teleconference of March 24, 2003, and approval thereof is courteously solicited.

Applicant has further submitted herein amendments to the specification. In the teleconference on March 24, 2003, the Examiner recommended that reference numerals be added directed to: (1) the contact points along which the thin-walled members (5) attach to the inner wall; and (2) the portion of the inner wall between the sets of thin-walled members. Accordingly, Applicant has provided complete substitute paragraphs, including recitations of the newly added reference numerals, and directions as to where the paragraphs are to be substituted in the original text. Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner's approval and entry of the amendments to the specification.

In the Office Action dated October 16, 2002, claims 1-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, as indefinite. The Examiner originally stated that the claim language was inconsistent because Applicant claims supporting protrusions consisting of thin walled members "extending in parallel" wherein the thin-walled members each have a ridge line (7) "sloping toward the opening cover (2)." In particular, the Examiner stated that it is unclear "how the members can extend in parallel and be sloping." Further to the Examiner's recommendations in the teleconference of March 24, 2003, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite: "wherein the contact points of each of said thin-walled members with said peripheral wall defines a line substantially parallel to a line defined by the contact points of the corresponding thin-walled member with said peripheral wall." In other words, the contact points or edges along which the thin-walled members are attached to the inside of the joint are substantially parallel. In accordance with the Examiner's recommendation, the amendment to claim 1 is believed to resolve the issues raised by the Examiner and place claim 1 in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

In Applicant's amendment filed January 22, 2003, Applicant submitted new independent claim 15. Applicant has presently amended claim 15 to recite the limitation discussed with and approved by the Examiner in the March 24, 2003 teleconference relative to claim 1. In particular, the following limitation, identical in form to the corresponding limitation of claim 1, has been added to claim 15: